Getting Started!

The ViTaL Development & Research Programme

Report No. 5

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Acknowledgements:

The work for this report has been undertaken, compiled and written up principally by Ann Cole with assistance and contributions from those named below.

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- Susan Williams
- Ruth Deakin Crick
- Tim Small
- Providers
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1.   Introduction

The 'Getting Started' Project aimed to find out how far it was possible to enhance the learning experiences of young people not in education or training (NEET) through inviting them to assess themselves in relation to seven dimensions of learning power using the Effective Lifelong Learning Inventory (ELLI). The assessment data was used by the providers to frame appropriate learning experiences and to support the young people in setting their own learning targets. A consortium of six providers of pre-Education to Employment (E2E) training for NEET learners, funded through the LSC, were partners in the project during the period from September 2005 to July 2007. ViTaL Partnerships (formerly Bristol Learning Partnership) was a seventh partner, providing a preliminary audit of provision, training and mentoring in the use of ELLI processes and practices and an evaluation of the outcomes. This report is an account of that process and represents the substantive outcome of that evaluation.

2.   Background and Rationale

In recent years there has been mounting government concern[1] about social inclusion; breaking the poverty cycle; crime, unemployment and teenage pregnancies. Several government initiatives have been designed to address this. The Children Act 2004 (based on 'Every Child Matters') brings together the agencies with responsibility for children and young people with a concern for their overall wellbeing. Performance indicators on the 'Change 4 Children' (policy guidance document following the Act) include the target of reducing the number of 16-19 year olds not in education, employment or training (NEET). The Tomlinson Report[2] set out a vision for providing much greater flexibility between vocational and academic provision for young people and has led to significant changes in provision for all 16-19 year olds.

Given the current and emergent practices to integrate education, social services and health services for both children and young people, this project aimed to benefit excluded 16-19 year old young people, through deepening their understanding of how they learn, and to contribute to policy and practice through:

- ⬦ Using the ELLI assessment tool to explore their learning profiles on Seven Dimensions of Learning Power (Deakin Crick 2006)

- ⬦ Using assessment information diagnostically to develop learning self awareness and encouraging young people to take responsibility for their own learning pathways and processes

- ⬦ Identifying barriers to progression

- ⬦ Contributing to the development of pedagogical strategies for re-engaging NEET young people with formal learning.

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[1] "Bridging the Gap", report by Social Exclusion Unit, 1999

[2]

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3. Aims & Objectives

The overall aim of the project was to find out how effectively providers could use the dynamic assessment of learning power – i.e. assessment designed to stimulate and record change – in order to evaluate and enhance understanding of the learning profiles and needs of NEET young people and develop and evaluate strategies aimed at inviting them to become self aware learners and able to take responsibility for their own learning.

The project had three components and was completed in two phases:

Phase 1: Audit of provision

- To establish a network of relevant contacts for the delivery of the scheme (LSC, Contract Providers, other relevant providers, Connexions, relevant agencies).
- To create a baseline for the overall external evaluation with contract providers to measure future performance by assessing providers' understanding of learner, organisational and management needs.
- To compile a directory of provision below Level 2 within West of England.
- To draw on learning from regional and national initiatives on success characteristics and best practice for 16-19 year olds who are NEET.
- To complete a report on Phase 1 by October 2005.

Phase 2: a) Development and b) Evaluation of learning interventions

- To train 30 trainer/providers as ELLI Champions in the purpose and application of the ELLI profiling tool
- To work with trainer/providers in applying the ideas and practices of learning power to the learning experiences of young people
- To analyze the data derived from the ELLI profiles; the characteristics of the cohort as a whole and pre and post interventions.
- To work with trainer/providers in evaluating the provision for NEET learners in this project.

4. Methodology

4.1 Phase 1
Phase 1 of the project included a literature review, the audit of provision and the training of providers in the applications and practices of learning power and its assessment using the ELLI profiling tool. In addition, ELLI was trialled with both providers and learners. An Interim Report [2] (July 2006) provided the framework for Phase 2. The key recommendation from Phase 1 was to adapt the ELLI tool so that it could be completed on paper, using concepts lines which would later be converted into numerical scores for analysis.

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[2] ' Getting Started' Pre-Entry to Employment (Pre-e2e) & Education Unlimited (EUL) Interim Report Research & External Evaluation Ross Thompson.

4.2   Phase 2

Phase 2 began after re-negotiating the contract with the LSC and was adapted to reflect findings from Phase 1 (shown in Appendices 1 & 2).

For the intervention study in Phase 2, trainer/providers initially supported individual NEET learners in completing their learning profiles as part of their induction to the training centre. This was followed by trainers/providers supporting the learners in reviewing and interpreting their profiles, using the self-assessment data to enhance the learning experiences of each individual, then asked the learners to re-assess their learning power on exit from the centre. A critical friend/researcher worked with the trainer/providers, training them as 'ELLI Champions' (see 4.2 below), mentoring and supporting the process and collecting data with which to evaluate it.

4.3   Sample

A total of 780 learners entered 5 training centres over the course of the project. The providers operated in two consortia, one comprising of 4 training providers, the other an FE college provider. 44 providers were trained in the ideas and practices of ELLI and worked with these young people. Learning profiles were administered to 376 learners on entry to the centres, and 304 on exit. Learners were drawn from Bristol, Bath & Northeast Somerset, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire LEAs. Much of the provision was located in multi-cultural and socio-economically deprived wards of Bristol. Tables showing the breakdown of the sample by gender and provider can be found in Appendix 1.

4.4   The Interventions and Evaluation Strategy

The researcher gave the trainer providers two days of training each, over a total of six full days and three half days, in the use and application of the ELLI profiling tool, its adaptation to a paper-based format, and the interpretation of its data, to enable them effectively to 'Champion' these ideas and implement them in their practice.

4.5   Research Questions (RQs)

The following Research Questions shaped the enquiry:
   1   How can the dynamic assessment of Learning Power support NEET Learners in re-engaging in employment, education or training?

   2   In what ways does the use of ELLI Learning Power profiles support the learning provider in the development, delivery and evaluation of their programmes/interventions?

   3   Do any key themes/issues emerge that might support strategic development in the learning of NEET learners and the professional practice of the providers?

   4   What are the statistical characteristics of this cohort of NEET learners in terms of their learning power both pre- and post-interventions and how can this data inform the self-evaluation of the providers?

4.6   Adaptation of intervention strategies to reflect Phase 1 findings

There was a gap of three months in the project after Phase 1, due to re-negotiation of the overall contract. This entailed some loss of momentum and a change of staffing. To reflect Phase 1 findings, the following objectives were introduced for Phase 2:
   - To establish positive working relationships with all operational and training staff
   - To develop transparent and appropriate lines of communication within the project and

across consortia teams
- To build working partnerships through training forums to re-kindle interest in the purposes of ELLI as an 'assessment for learning' tool
- To listen to the voices of NEET learners via their Pre E2E training providers, advisers and tutors
- To confer with both the Getting Started consortia and the University of Bristol ELLI R&D Team to develop an ELLI paper based profile for NEET learners, incorporating suggested language, processes, practices and upholding the values and purposes of the original ELLI research
- To ensure trainers' and tutors' training needs were identified and met to support the development and adoption of a ELLI profiling model most suited to Pre E2E learners
- To develop, design, review and amend support materials
- To re-establish the use of ELLI in the new paper based format
- To establish data collection processes and procedures.

4.7 Creating and validating a paper-based self-assessment tool

This process involved the researcher working with all providers in focus groups of organizational managers, project managers, tutors, advisors and outreach workers over an initial six week period starting in October 2006.

To prompt debate, the researcher shared the outcomes of a collaborative research project between the RSA, The University of Bristol and the University of Newcastle. Researchers had worked with a cohort of NEET learners engaged in training within both a local training centre in Bath and in a Young Offenders Unit. The 'Learning by Accident' [3] research involved learners in 'personalized learning' processes as ELLI users and 'co-researchers'. The methodology appealed to the 'Getting Started' managers and practitioners and was therefore used as a starting point for developing a paper based ELLI profile.

Focus groups representing organizational and project management as well as operational teams worked collaboratively with a researcher to shape and agree the language and graphics of a new ELLI paper profile. Giving practitioners 'a voice and a choice' in decision-making processes in this way was used to develop a sense of 'ownership'. Debate shifted from historical concerns to engagement with current 'learners' and 'learning how to learn'.

A common purpose emerged as focus groups sought to develop a profiling tool:
- fit for purpose
- relevant to personal development needs
- applicable to training processes and practices
- supporting 'learning how to learn' practices
- scaffolding exiting, transition and progression processes

A six week time-frame was agreed in which to establish the ELLI paper profile. Due to the different operational characteristics of the two consortia, MINT Consortia Project Managers became the 'profile development team', engaging in the task as 'co-researchers'.

Attention specifically focused on three priorities:
- language choice and use

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[3] Millner N. (2006)

- relevant graphics
- how to assess and measure learners' self-perceptions of learning power

Developing an appropriate language for learning became the first priority. All colleagues sought to identify explanatory language to:

- engage learners
- relate to learners,
- appeal to the age group
- validate ELLI Research & Development

In particular, groups looked for 'relevance' and sought to avoid 'patronising' learners through the use of over-simplified language and images.

The ELLI R&D Team was consulted at each stage. Materials from the RSA research project were reviewed and ideas adopted, including the language of 'learning zones', as follows:

ELLI Learning Power Dimensions:	'Learning Zones':
1 Critical Curiosity	1 Detective Zone
2 Creativity	2 Spring Board Zone
3 Strategic Awareness	3 Pilot Zone
4 Resilience	4 Gritty Zone
5 Making Meaning	5 Sorting Zone
6 Changing and Learning	6 Morphing Zone
7 Learning Relationships	7 Team Zone

The results reflect the language thought to have the most appeal in engaging NEET learners in the processes supporting 'learning how to learn'.

Following the practice used successfully in the RSA project, 'concept lines' were used to enable learners to assess themselves dynamically (i.e. knowing they are capable of changing their position) on continua between the positive concepts of the seven dimensions and their opposite poles. A research brief was given to two MINT Consortia colleagues to identify and circulate a range of pertinent images to provide a recognizable set of seven symbols representing the continuum and meaning of each learning dimension.

These seven concept lines, each representing the newly named 'zones' of learning power became the basis of the new profile. Reflecting the Likert type scale used in the ELLI-online profiling tool, opposite poles were defined as 'least like me' and 'most like me'.

4.8 Optimising validity of data from the new tool

Recognising that learners' direct self-assessment of themselves on each learning dimension through the paper-based tool raised issues of validity compared with the more scientific approach of a psychometric, 72-item questionnaire, the team worked to ensure that the outcomes were as valid and reliable as possible. The researcher worked with the Project Management Team to review the paper profile at each meeting and ensured that all developments were passed to partnership teams for approval. The ELLI Research & Development Team played a key role in this process. Specific guidelines were agreed to ensure training providers and learners were clear about how to complete the profiles. Data from the profiles were declared invalid if concept lines were incomplete or not clearly marked. Criteria of validity were agreed and adopted, such as total completion and clarity of notation. Profiles were only completed once providers had complete confidence in the learner's

understanding of the seven Learning Dimensions. Consistency of practice was achieved through continual review and evaluation.

Demographic and generic data were collected and matched to individual profiles, as follows:
- type of profile – Pre or Post
- profiling date
- consortium provider
- programme provider
- learner DOB
- gender

This broadening of information available for each learner offered the potential to anonymise and interrogate statistics from which a range of conclusions and indicators might be drawn.

4.9   Implementing the adapted strategy
The paramount priority was to embed the paper self assessment tool within training programmes and practices. Practitioners reiterated the need to use ELLI as an integral 'learning how to learn' support and development tool. Colleagues from both consortia identified where the profiling tool would fit best into programmes and practices. In all cases, whether EUL, ASDAN, MINT or bespoke individual learning programmes, ELLI paper profiling was thought to have the potential to be an integral part of training NEET learners.

As a result, ELLI became embedded at specific points in Pre E2E programmes to support and enhance current training practices. Dependant upon the provider, the ELLI profiling tool was typically used at points of:
- Signing up trainees
- Starting programmes / Induction
- Reviewing and Self Review
- Planning
- Target Setting
- Evaluating progress
- Celebrating Success
- Exit and progression

4.10   Data Collection
Qualitative data was recorded in field notes from thirty-six partnership meetings, twenty-four with consortia and twelve with the LSC. The researcher observed and held focus groups with twelve learners, conducted semi-structured interviews with twenty-four learners and thirteen Provider Managers. Questionnaires were completed by sixteen Provider Managers or Project Managers with reference to their Operational Teams, and thirteen Learners.

In addition, quantitative data was gathered from all available learner profiles, on entry to the centre and on exit, using concept lines on which learners were asked to place themselves in relation to each of the Seven Dimensions of learning power. The purpose of the quantitative analysis was to explore whether there were any significant differences in the learning profile scores reported by students after the learning interventions devised by the providers, using the ELLI profiling tool and practices. Each student completed a profile when they entered the training centre, and when they left, having completed a unit of learning which incorporated self assessment of their own learning power and target setting. The learning profiles describe what the learners said about themselves and thus represent a subjective measure capable of

quantitative measurement and analysis

In total 376 ELLI Pre Profiles were undertaken and 334 Post Profiles were completed. The final sample for analysis included 304 learners with validated and matched pre- and post-intervention profiles.

4.11   Data Analysis

Qualitative data was analyzed thematically, in relation to the four research questions, using written transcripts and recordings from semi-structured interviews, focus groups, observation and field notes.

Quantitative data from the ELLI concept lines were converted into numerical data and entered into SPSS package for analysis.   First, a tool was developed to convert learner self-perceptions marked on the seven concept lines into statistical data.   A template was developed for identifying the self-assessment point and its corresponding numerical score on each of the seven learning zone concept lines. Recorded in percentages, this was used to identify learners' perceptions of their 'learning how to learn' capabilities. This data was analyzed by learning dimension. Monthly records were kept noting monthly Pre and Post Profiling outcomes. The difference between the two outcomes provided the measured 'distance travelled'. This monthly analysis and recording process also provided a tracking system for trainers and trainees.

5.   Ethical Issues

Ethical issues were addressed by the researcher and the providers in the following ways:
- Clarifying and agreeing roles and responsibilities with all participants
- Agreeing inclusive communication protocols and open information sharing at the outset and at each stage of the project
- Making clear to participants and reminding them regularly of their right of withdrawal at any point in the process
- Acquiring their informed consent to the researcher recording and keeping non-identifiable data about them
- Establishing a complaints procedure through the line management systems of all partners
- Paying due regard to all health & safety considerations in the environment
- Preserving anonymity and confidentiality of all data
- Ensuring data collection and storage accords with the Data Protection Act
- Offering feedback and open access to findings to all participants

6.   Findings from Phase 1

6.1   Audit of Provision

Phase 1 research resulted in the detailed identification of the NEET sector in the region and the location of NEET learners engaged in Below Level 1 Courses, course ratings and the range of training providers actively engaged in supporting the sector across the region. A summary is presented in the tables in Appendix 1.

The following factors were identified as potential barriers to learning and development for a significant proportion of the sample:

- rurality
- being known to YOTs (Youth Offending Teams)
- parenting responsibilities
- being in care or who are care leavers
- disengagement from mainstream education prior to the age of 16
- membership of black or other minority ethnic communities
- psychological or emotional difficulties

6.2   Other key findings from Phase One

These included:
- Providers received a high proportion of self-referrals, above 50% in some cases, which was seen as an indication of the esteem in which learners hold programmes
- The most effective programmes were well prepared, operated within clear boundaries, provided learners with voice and choice within highly structured, flexible and consistent learning and training trajectory.
- Practitioners valued the emphasis on process rather than simply 'output' at the end of the programme, being concerned that 'Good News' stories can get lost and recognizing the potential of the ELLI self-assessment process to capture these and illuminate ways to future successes, especially through a 'case study' research approach
- Giving learners the opportunity to have their voice heard at the start of a review led to a greater sense of empowerment, confidence and motivation.
- The ESF specifications for recording and reporting were not felt by providers to enable reports to reflect accurate or recognizable pictures of learners, their stories or progress.

7.   Findings from Phase 2

7.1   (RQ1) *How can the dynamic assessment of Learning Power support NEET Learners in re-engaging in employment, education or training?*

7.1.1   NEET learners were increasingly receptive to and able to relate a 'Language for Learning' to their learning experiences in terms of the seven dimensions

Comments included:
- *'Every time it's used you know how you work' (Making Connections / Sorting Zone)*
- *'You have to stick at it, if you want to get it' (Resilience / Gritty Zone)*
- *'Sticking at it (learning) through team work' (Resilience / Gritty Zone + Learning Relationships / Team Zone)*
- *'I can manage trick questions' (Critical Curiosity / Detective Zone)*
- *'You get a picture of where you are' (Strategic Awareness/Pilot Zone)*
- *'We don't use the symbols here, we use the language…...it shows how you've done and how you've worked…I think it's something good." (Changing & Learning/Morphing Zone)*
- *'The layout is good…..I like expressing my feelings in writing though'….learner offered to send her story to the researcher (Learning Relationships / Team Zone)*
- *'It's good….'cos it's used as well as a CV…shows how you work…..its good for interviews too.' (Ch & Learning/Morphing Zone; Strategic Awareness/Pilot Zone)*

7.1.2 Learners reported significant and positive change in their perceptions of themselves as learners and their attitudes to learning, many reporting themselves as having more confidence, motivation to learn or a renewed sense of hope in their future as learners

Comments included:
- *'I think about things a lot more now'*
- *'It (ELLI) made me think about how I learnt….I didn't know really till then'*
- *'I'm not afraid to give answers now'*
- *'I've discovered things about myself.'*
- *'I want to build up my learning skills'*
- *'I like trying out news things. I like decision making…..I'm with people the same as me… I have to think'… ' You get a picture of where you are……It's easier to move on from here*
- *'I had to be helped to come here….I had no confidence….I used to be in my room all the time…..I couldn't get out…..now I've completed my profile….found out about myself…can believe in myself…..I'm emigrating to Canada on my own in three weeks time' 'I get a sense of achievement from what I do'.*
- *'I like the quiet in my head now'….more confidence!*
- *'I want to put my head to it'*
- *'I'm confident now…….I've eye contact now…I'm self confident…I've matured since I came here…(How?)...I'm more responsible, I want to listen and learn …to get on, go forward to get qualifications'*
- *'You've got to do something with your life….I'm considering it now' (as a result of finding out about himself as a learner)*
- *'I'm thinking about getting my head down and achieving something'.*

7.1.3 Providers observed that learners, through well-managed and facilitated reflection and action on their learning power profiles, increased their sense of autonomy, confidence and capacity as learners to fulfil their potential.

Comments included:
- *'Learners have certainly been able to link the different zones to specific activities and realising their potential as learners.'*
- *Debbie is beginning to believe she has a future*
- *As Scott progressed on the course he realised he had the potential to achieve whatever he wanted in life*
- *As with the other learners Scott was not aware of all the skills and abilities he had until we broke them down for him and he could visually see how he had improved. He was very pleased when we were doing the Post Profile as he genuinely felt he had really progressed in several areas.'*
- *By the time we did Titan's Post Profile he found that he had improved greatly in a number of areas and was very pleased. At first Titan did not see the point of the scale but as the weeks went on it became obvious to him which skills he was using on course and which skills he was improving on. Titan is now doing full time hours in his employment and enjoying spending his wages each week! As well as brushing up on his computer skills'*

Evidence was also recorded in the work of a PGCE student working with one of the providers

who used ELLI in an action research project[5] on reflective practice. Her research findings showed that reflective practice primarily:
- benefits learners by raising their awareness of learning processes
- endorses learner autonomy
- improves the sense of learners 'belonging'
- builds confidence skills

Her findings also showed that to be successful reflective practice requires:
- good management
- maintenance to avoid issues going unnoticed
- effective facilitator skills

7.2 (RQ2) *In what ways does the use of ELLI Learning Power profiles support the learning provider in the development, delivery and evaluation of their programmes/interventions?*

7.2.1 Despite initial reluctance to engage with the ELLI online assessment tool, after collaborating in the development of a paper-based version providers became convinced that ELLI profiling could enhance their practice.

Comments included:
- *I feel that ELLI could really benefit learners if used properly. I think the fact that the paper based work came in half way through the contract made a huge impact on how used it has been. It is something that needs to be embedded in a programme from the beginning and used on a daily basis with the learners. It also needs all staff to be on board in the delivery of ELLI.'*
- *'ELLI can fit into almost any activity you do with learners, it is very easy to fit the zones into aspects of a session. This has made it easier to show how sessions have a purpose.'*
- *'Through using ELLI I feel it highlights the unique needs of 16-19 NEET learners, the process, wording and approach needs to encompass individual backgrounds. By bringing ELLI into a learning format such as this I have had to be aware of the need to adapt ELLI to the learning approach rather than the learning to ELLI.'*
- *'ELLI provides examples of 'soft learning' (ref Learning Dimensions) and show learners that this is valued and important. The wording and images - still have difficulty adapting to the general programme of learning'*
- *'ELLI allows tutors to provide a tool for discussion in setting targets and personal goal setting'*

7.2.2 Involvement in the collaborative process of developing a new profiling tool led to trainers engaging with the ELLI concepts and principles, recognising the power of a 'language for learning' and devising new materials and interventions to develop these in practice.

These included:
- materials enabling visual and tactile engagement
- graphics for use in the production of learning zone cards
- posters and other prompts to encourage learning to learn
- explanatory statements from which were developed further support materials
- language for 'zone-specific' opportunities for learners

Examples of the new interventions and materials can be found in Appendix 4.

7.2.3 Providers saw the potential of ELLI as a tool for 'scaffolding practice' through:
- **supporting the journey into learner maturity**
- **enabling trainees to start a new experience of learning how to learn**
- **showing learners' capabilities in a new light**
- **offering a language for learning**
- **embedding the self assessment into professional practice**
- **changing learners attitudes to learning**
- **accepting that each is a unique learner**
- **motivating learners**
- **locating learning in a new work focused environment**

Comments included:
- *'It follows on from the paperwork, so there are no issues.'*
- *'We are comfortable with one another…its less about an 'interview' (Ref to Initial signing up process)*
- *It's easy to use in signing up processes, often undertaken in public places (e.g. Tesco Café)*
- *'More about pulling out points (for discussion) …..so it's easy to vary topics out of it (for Action Planning / Review / Target Setting)*
- *'It supports the exit strategy'*
- *'I'd advise embedding ELLI in the process'…(i.e. from the beginning of programmes)*
- *'It pays attention to the needs of the NEET group'.*
- *'It's based on the reality of the client group'.*
- *'It's basically become an integral part of the process'*
- *'It's a sound learning tool….too late to be of value. Ideal would be to adopt it from the outset' (of the project)*

7.3 (RQ3) *Do any key themes/issues emerge that might support strategic development in the learning of NEET learners and the professional practice of the providers?*

7.3.1 Providers changed their practice during Phase 2 to embed ELLI in their course planning, including the induction and exit processes and certification involved.

Evidence includes:
- Pre-intervention profiling was introduced into the signing-up or induction processes
- Outcomes were used as an integral part of reviewing and evaluating progress
- Learning power dimensions were used explicitly in target-setting and action planning
- Post-intervention profiles were used to inform the exit interview
- ELLI outcomes, in terms of measured gains or 'distance travelled', were used to improve progression, through featuring in CV preparation, interview technique coaching and progression certificates

7.4 (RQ4) *What are the statistical characteristics of this cohort of NEET learners in terms of their learning power both pre- and post-interventions*

and how can this data inform the self-evaluation of the providers?

7.4.1 Distribution of the pre-intervention cohort
The following tables show the distribution of the cohort by gender and provider:

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	258	68.6	69.7	69.7
	Female	112	29.8	30.3	100.0
	Total	370	98.4	100.0	
Missing	System	6	1.6		
Total		376	100.0		

Table 1: Distribution by Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	148	39.4	48.8	48.8
	2	54	14.4	17.8	66.7
	3	48	12.8	15.8	82.5
	4	42	11.2	13.9	96.4
	5	11	2.9	3.6	100.0
	Total	303	80.6	100.0	
Missing	System	73	19.4		
Total		376	100.0		

Table 2: Distribution by provider

Showing that more than two-thirds of the cohort were male and that Provider 1, with 148 learners, accounted for nearly 40% of the total sample, whilst provider 5, with only 11 learners, accounted for under 3%, by far the smallest percentage.

7.4.2 Characteristics of the cohort by learning power, on entry
Table 3 sets out descriptive statistics of the cohort, pre-intervention: the number of cases, minimum and maximum scores, the mean scores on each dimension and the standard deviation, for the whole cohort on entry. **This demonstrates that before the interventions the learners on average reported themselves as passive and lacking in self awareness, with Critical Curiosity (52%) being the lowest, followed by Strategic Awareness (55%). Resilience (62%) and Learning Relationships (65%) were reported to have the highest mean scores.**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Critical Curiosity time one	371	.02	1.00	52.15	.25930
Creativity time one	371	.04	1.00	55.80	.25329
Strategic Awareness time one	371	.02	1.00	54.92	.26307
Resilience time one	371	.02	1.00	61.68	.26118
Meaning making time one	370	.05	1.00	55.80	.24119
Changing and learning time one	371	.04	1.00	59.26	.22461
Learning relationships time one	371	.03	1.00	65.94	.23144

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for learning power dimensions
for whole cohort on entry

7.4.2 Differences, and the extent of their significance, in the learning power reported by the whole cohort before and after interventions

Table 4 shows the mean scores in all seven dimensions for the whole cohort, pre-intervention (time 1) and post-intervention (time 2), with standard deviations and standard error, revealing that **the mean scores increased in all seven dimensions, the highest increase being in Critical Curiosity (now 65%: a rise of 12.5%) with Meaning Making (now 67%: a rise of nearly 11.5%) and Strategic Awareness (now 66%: a rise of 11%) also showing similar gains** :

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Critical Curiosity time one	52.32	308	.26119	.01488
	Critical Curiosity time two	64.84	308	.21404	.01220
Pair 2	Creativity time one	55.63	308	.25274	.01440
	Creativity time two	65.60	308	.20371	.01161
Pair 3	Strategic Awareness time one	54.93	308	.26676	.01520
	Strategic Awareness time two	65.87	308	.20947	.01194
Pair 4	Resilience time one	60.81	308	.26455	.01507
	Resilience time two	70.11	308	.21417	.01220
Pair 5	Meaning making time one	55.56	308	.24472	.01394
	Meaning Making time 2	66.97	308	.19126	.01090
Pair 6	Changing and learning time one	59.37	308	.22508	.01283
	Changing and Learning time two	68.94	308	.19373	.01104
Pair 7	Learning relationships time one	65.36	308	.23481	.01338
	Learning Relationships time two	75.40	308	.18729	.01067

Table 4: Paired Samples Statistics, whole cohort mean scores
pre- and post- intervention

A Paired T Test shown in Table 5 revealed the extent of the significance of these differences, **which were at the p=<.000 level of significance in all seven dimensions:**

		Paired Differences					t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Critical Curiosity time one - Critical Curiosity time two	-12.523	.22570	.01286	-.15053	-.09992	-9.738	307	.000
Pair 2	Creativity time one - Creativity time two	-09.968	.21722	.01238	-.12403	-.07532	-8.053	307	.000
Pair 3	Strategic Awareness time one - Strategic Awareness time two	-10.938	.21365	.01217	-.13334	-.08543	-8.985	307	.000
Pair 4	Resilience time one - Reslience time two	-09.308	.24938	.01421	-.12104	-.06512	-6.551	307	.000
Pair 5	Meaning making time one - Meaning Making time two	-11.407	.22615	.01289	-.13943	-.08872	-8.853	307	.000
Pair 6	Changing and learning time one - Changing and Learning time two	-09.577	.20976	.01195	-.11929	-.07225	-8.013	307	.000
Pair 7	Learning relationships time one - Learning Relationships time two	-10.039	.20872	.01189	-.12379	-.07699	-8.441	307	.000

Table 5: Paired Samples Test before and after learning power interventions

The differences, shown in the left-hand column, show that gains of at least 9% were achieved in all the seven dimensions. **Thus the learning power as self-reported by the whole cohort increased to a statistically significant degree (i.e. which cannot be explained by mere chance) in every one of the seven dimensions, following the interventions.**

7.4.3   Differences between providers: (i) variances between groups on entry
An analysis of variance computed for the sample to explore the differences between providers' groups *on entry* demonstrated that before the interventions there were significant differences between the groups in their self-reported scores in critical curiosity, creativity and learning relationships. **Thus the learning power characteristics of the groups were already different in three out of the seven dimensions.**

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Critical Curiosity time one	Between Groups	1.054	4	.264	4.034	.003
	Within Groups	19.336	296	.065		
	Total	20.390	300			

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Creativity time one	Between Groups	1.020	4	.255	4.142	.003
	Within Groups	18.231	296	.062		
	Total	19.251	300			
Strategic Awareness time one	Between Groups	.550	4	.137	1.962	.100
	Within Groups	20.736	296	.070		
	Total	21.286	300			
Resilience time one	Between Groups	.267	4	.067	.951	.435
	Within Groups	20.751	296	.070		
	Total	21.018	300			
Meaning making time one	Between Groups	.478	4	.120	2.030	.090
	Within Groups	17.432	296	.059		
	Total	17.910	300			
Changing and learning time one	Between Groups	.568	4	.142	2.899	.022
	Within Groups	14.492	296	.049		
	Total	15.059	300			
Learning relationships time one	Between Groups	.204	4	.051	.920	.453
	Within Groups	16.433	296	.056		
	Total	16.637	300			

Table 6: ANOVA to demonstrate differences between groups on entry

7.4.3 Differences between providers: (ii) variances between groups post-intervention

An analysis of variance, conducted with the post-intervention test sample and shown in Table 8 below, indicates that there were now significant differences in outcomes between providers' groups on six out of seven dimensions of learning power. Critical Curiosity, which had shown significant difference on entry, was now the only Dimension where NO significant difference could be found between groups. **This suggests that what providers actually do, in terms of pedagogical practices and social care, makes a significant difference to how their learners perceive themselves and how much they report themselves as having changed, after the interventions, in terms of the seven dimensions of learning power**.

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Critical Curiosity time two	Between Groups	.349	4	.087	1.926	.106
	Within Groups	13.416	296	.045		
	Total	13.765	300			
Creativity time two	Between Groups	.479	4	.120	3.025	.018
	Within Groups	11.720	296	.040		
	Total	12.199	300			
Strategic Awareness time two	Between Groups	.722	4	.180	4.286	.002
	Within Groups	12.467	296	.042		
	Total	13.189	300			
Reslience time two	Between Groups	.865	4	.216	4.825	.001
	Within Groups	13.262	296	.045		
	Total	14.126	300			
Meaning Making time two	Between Groups	.835	4	.209	6.228	.000

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Within Groups	9.927	296	.034		
	Total	10.762	300			
Changing and Learning time two	Between Groups	.796	4	.199	5.561	.000
	Within Groups	10.589	296	.036		
	Total	11.384	300			
Learning Relationships time two	Between Groups	.694	4	.174	5.165	.000
	Within Groups	9.946	296	.034		
	Total	10.640	300			

Table 8: Differences between providers' groups post test, on all dimensions

7.4.4 Differences between providers: (iii) comparison of the distribution of mean scores across the groups in each dimension, between pre- and post-intervention

The following paired charts show how mean scores were distributed pre- and post-intervention:

On entry	*Post-intervention*
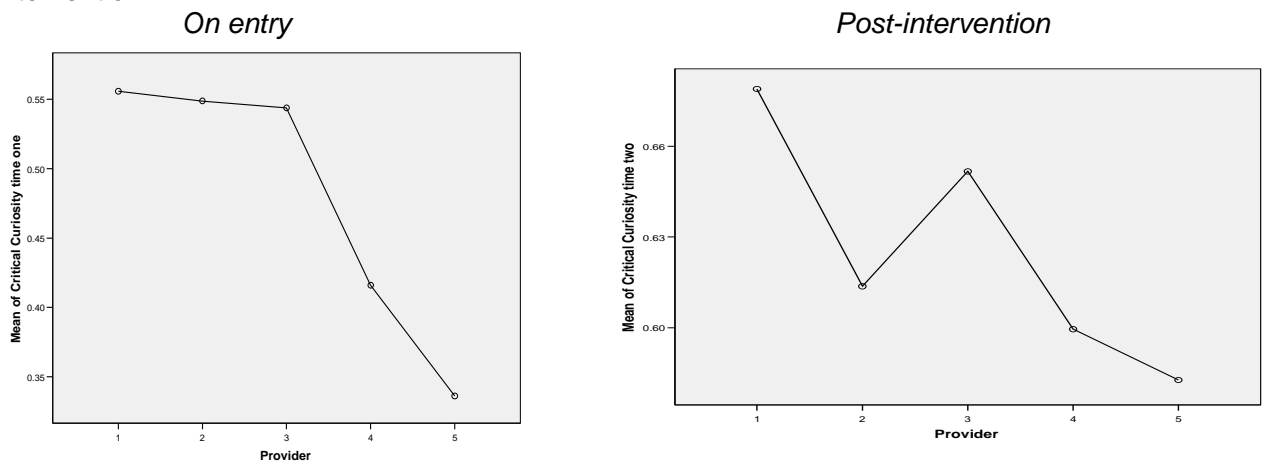
Table 8: Differences between provider's groups in Critical Curiosity

On entry	*Post-intervention*

19
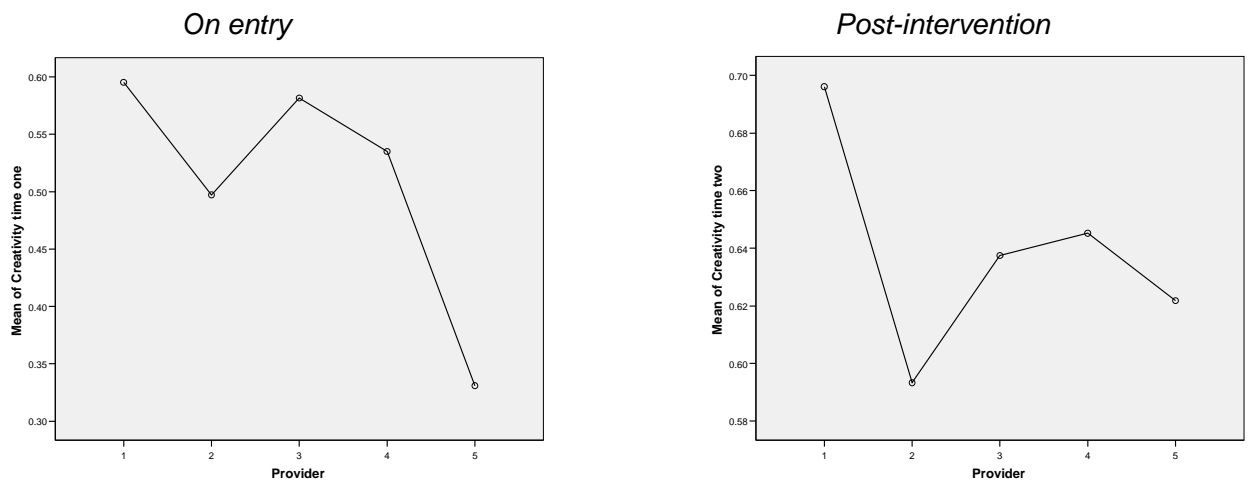
Table 9: Differences between provider's groups in Creativity

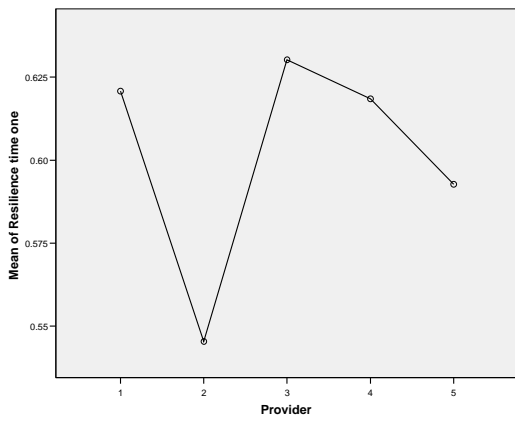| On entry	Post-intervention
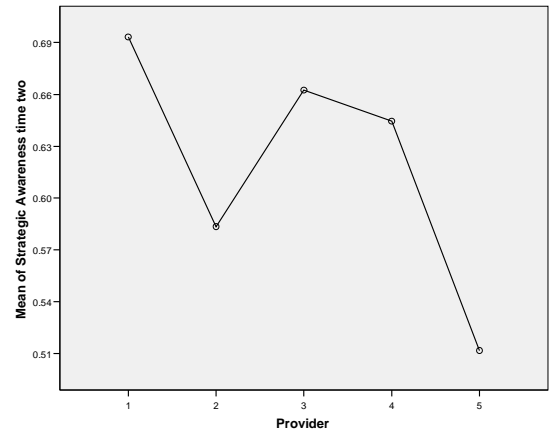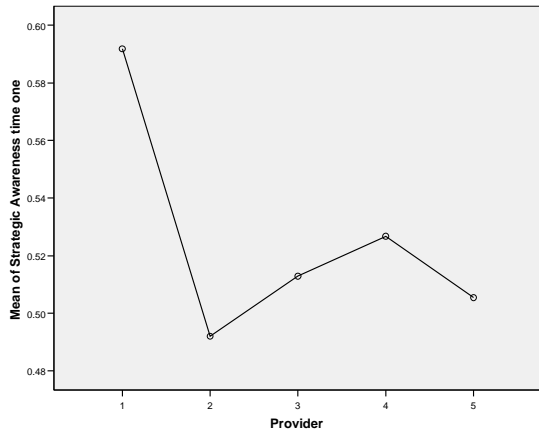
Table 9: Differences between provider's groups in Strategic Awareness

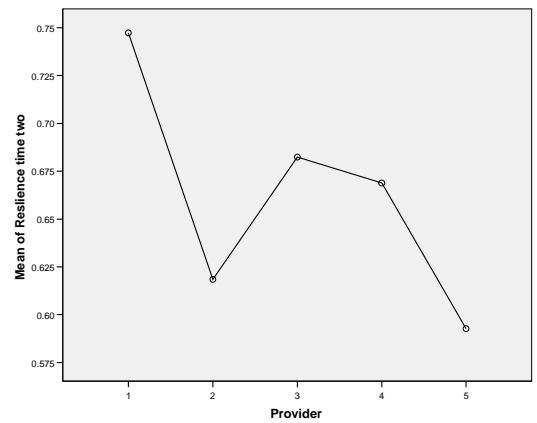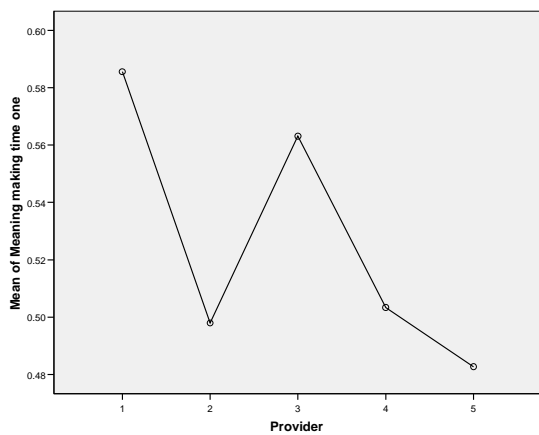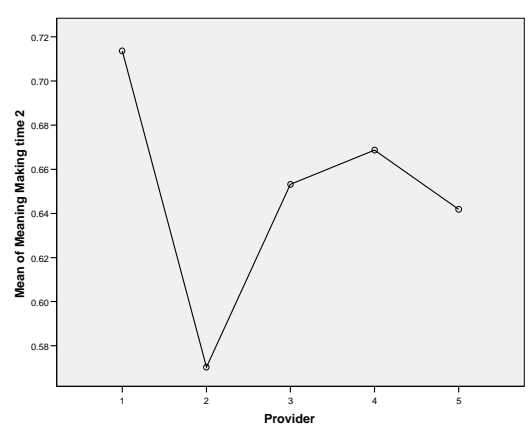| On entry	Post-intervention

Table 10: Differences between provider's groups in Resilience

On entry	Post-intervention

Table 11: Differences between provider's groups in Meaning Making

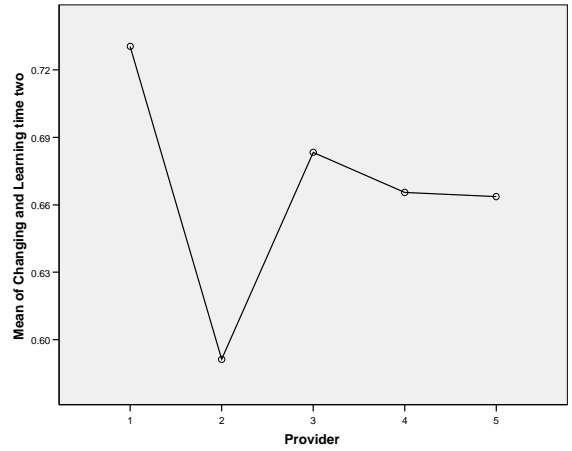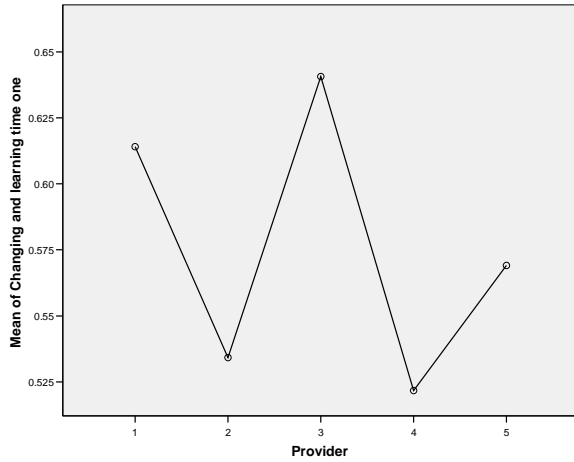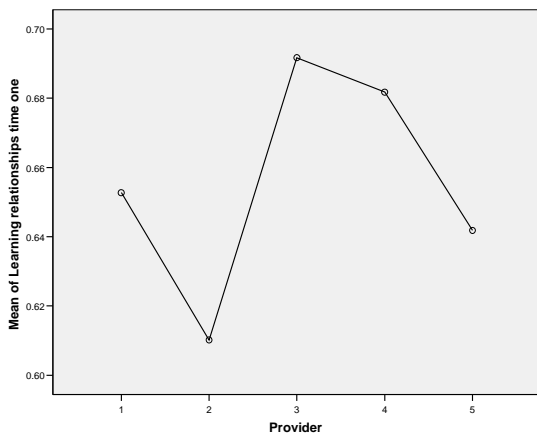| *On entry*	*Post-intervention*

Table 12: Differences between provider's groups in Changing & Learning

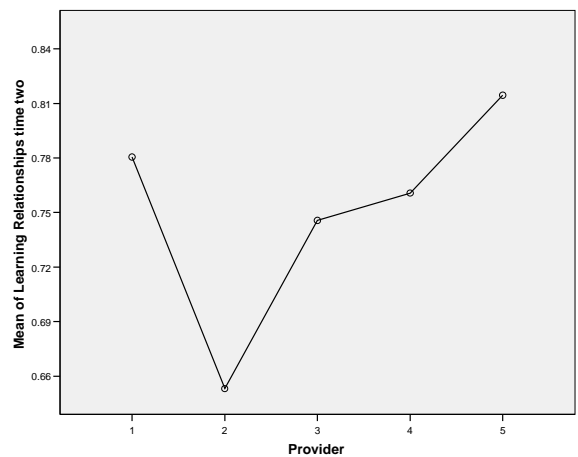| *On entry*	*Post-intervention*

Table 12: Differences between provider's groups in Learning Relationships

These tables illustrate the variations between the groups' learning power in the different dimensions and the changes reported in it. For instance, on entry, the Provider 1 group's data (of n146 matched pre- and post- profiles) tends to show higher scores than almost all the others except for the Provider 3 group (n48), which was higher in three dimensions, with the Provider 4 group (n42) higher in one. However, in the post-intervention data, the Provider 1 group comes out highest in all the dimensions except for Learning Relationships, where only the Provider 5 group have exceeded it, though this group had by far the smallest sample size (n11). The Provider 3 group appears to make up most ground in relation to the other groups in Strategic Awareness, but to lose ground in Creativity. The Provider 2 group (n 54) has the lowest baseline on entry in three out of the seven dimensions and is lowest in four dimensions after the interventions, three of which are different than before.

7.4.5   **Differences between providers: (iv) comparisons between the groups   of the number of learning power dimensions in which they recorded   significant gains**

Paired T-Tests, whose tables can be found in Appendix 5, revealed the differences between the Providers in the number of learning dimensions in which their groups reported statistically significant positive change. These are shown in the following table:

Provider	Matched profiles in sample	Statistically significant gains reported in:
1	146	Critical Curiosity; Creativity; Strategic Awareness; Resilience; Meaning making; Changing & Learning; Learning Relationships
2	54	Critical Curiosity; Creativity; Strategic Awareness; Resilience; Meaning making; Changing & Learning; Learning Relationships
3	48	Critical Curiosity; Strategic Awareness; Resilience; Learning Relationships
4	42	Critical Curiosity; Creativity; Strategic Awareness; Meaning making; Changing & Learning; Learning Relationships
5	11	Changing & Learning

Table 14: Dimensions in which the five Provider groups' made statistically significant gains, from pre- to post-intervention

Two of the Provider groups (1 and 2) can be seen to have matched the whole cohort finding of significant gains achieved in all seven dimensions. The Provider 4 group almost achieved this, lacking significant gain only in Resilience, in which it had recorded a relatively high baseline.   The Provider 3 group achieved significant gains in four dimensions and the Provider 5 group, whose small sample size makes significance harder to achieve, still recorded it in relation to Changing & Learning.

7.4.6   Differences between genders
An independent sample T Test, computed on the sample before the interventions, demonstrated a significant difference between males (n257) and females (n111) on resilience with females reporting themselves as more fragile and dependent (M=5.6, SD=.27) than males (M=.63, SD = .65) $t(366)=2.44$, $p=<.05$. However, on the post test sample of matched profiles there was no significant difference reported in resilience, nor in any other dimension, suggesting that in this respect there was more significant change in learning power for the females (n96) than for the males (n 212).

7.4.7   Summary of quantitative findings
These findings suggest the cohort on entry, as a whole, was characterised by being passive and lacking in self awareness as learners, particularly revealed by the percentage mean scores in Critical Curiosity, Creativity and Strategic Awareness being in the low-to-mid fifties. The findings demonstrate that there were significant differences on the pre and post intervention assessments, with gains in their self reporting on all seven dimensions of learning power across the whole cohort. The qualitative findings and the case studies taken together with these statistics lend weight to the suggestion that this was one outcome of the interventions and in particular the assessment of and reflection upon learning power within the groups. These data also suggest that the different providers had differential impact on their learners' sense of ownership of and capacity to change their own learning power and that there was more value added for girls than for boys through these interventions.

8.   Implications

8.1   Implications for Policy and Practice
This was a project in which important things were learned during the process that might have influenced and changed its design and progress if they had been known in advance: it was therefore an example of experiential learning for the researcher and providers as well as the NEET learners. The clearest example of this was in the change of strategy, as a result of Phase 1, which led to the collaborative work of devising and using the paper based profile.

The electronic version of the questionnaire, with its 72 items, was clearly found to be inappropriate for these learners. Partly as a result of that, at the outset of Phase 2, providers did not see programme delivery as an arena in which they wished to 'use' ELLI. Trainers specifically articulated the view that they were 'not teachers' and therefore had no need of support materials to scaffold their daily practice.

Once in use, however, the ELLI paper profile started to engender understanding and practitioners started to value ELLI as a tool to enhance training practices. Hitherto, this element had been missing. Encouraged and empowered, Project Managers identified wider team needs and sought operational team training, not only to foreground ELLI profiling but embed the concepts and practices associated with learning power in training practices across their programmes.

There were significant stages in the successful adoption and use of an ELLI based 'language for learning'. The implications are clear that this is most likely to occur when:
- practitioners understand the purposes of ELLI
- providers identify the relevance of profiling to NEET training programmes and practices
- NEET training processes, systems and programmes include ELLI profiling in support of trainees' learning journeys
- MINT Project Managers and operational teams work together creatively to develop support materials based on agreed ELLI symbols and language

8.2   Implications for research
The implications and lessons for practice emerging from these findings could be expanded and elucidated in at least three ways by further research: first by an enquiry which built upon the methodology of this project by adding a systematic analysis and characterisation of the interventions and strategies used by the different providers; this would enable conclusions to be reached about which practices led to more significant gains in learning power.

Secondly, it might be interesting and worthwhile at the next stage to introduce a clearer link between the diagnosis available through the profile on entry and the selection of dimension-related learning development strategies: in other words, to enable systematic evaluation of interventions targeted on specific learning dimensions found to be weaker in profiles on entry.

Thirdly, by using a simplified version of the electronic ELLI questionnaire with the facility for import and export of additional data, it would be possible to disaggregate a new sample of these learners, who tend, almost by definition, to be relatively fragile and dependent, and characterise individuals according the 'at risk' categories already in use by providers. This would make possible a valuable enquiry into the relationships between different kinds of social and personal fragility with learning power profiles on the seven dimensions. Ultimately, possibilities of early identification and targeted remedial action to build learning power on diagnosis might make a valuable contribution to practice in this intractable policy area of

improving education and employability for the 'hard-to reach'.

Ultimately, if resources could be found, a longitudinal study following the changes in learning power related to the baseline assessments and strategies used for one identified sample, would probably yield valuable lessons for both policy and practice.

10. Conclusions

The importance of this project in its social and political context should not be underestimated. Engaging 'hard-to-reach' learners and 'bridging the gap' of disengagement have been a high profile area of policy development for over a decade. As the call for 'world class' skills becomes ever more insistent, the 'employability agenda' remains as much a priority today as it has ever been. This piece of action research makes a significant contribution to that agenda, offering an approach which goes much further than simply exhorting and 'training' young people to take more responsibility for their learning and lives: it offers them a practical and accessible means of doing so, by which they appear to be genuinely motivated.

An important feature of the enquiry is its responsive and adaptable methodology, with the Phase 2 design work responding to the findings of Phase 1, opening the way for practitioners to see how they can have a real part to play in the work. Enabling practitioners to have a 'voice' and 'choice' was important in securing this outcome. Having come to the table disenfranchised and disengaged, the emphasis on all being 'valued' significantly contributed to re-engagement with the tool and project. Their inclusion and involvement in the design of the paper-based self-assessment tool and its applications was clearly essential in winning their commitment and participation. Without that channel of enthusiasm and support, it is highly unlikely that the learners would have responded in kind. The project is an example of partnership and collaboration in creating and exchanging 'new knowledge' in the style of David Hargreaves' model of 'Mode 2', or 'engaged' research (Hargreaves D. 1998; Foray D. & Hargreaves D. 2003), which he suggests is part of the role of 'creative professionals' in the 'knowledge society'.

Whilst the involvement of the providers in creating the paper-based tool was clearly an important factor in the success of the project, it is important to acknowledge the potential weaknesses of this approach in terms of validity. It is less 'scientific' than the ELLI questionnaire that assesses 'learning dispositions' through learners' self-reporting how they tend to 'think or feel or act' in everyday learning situations. Using direct self-assessment on the seven learning power dimensions with the paper-based tool firstly depends upon the level of learners' understanding, at the outset, of the depth and relevance of each dimension and, secondly, carries a greater risk of 'second-guessing', or learners reporting what they would like to be true rather than what is true. These weaknesses can be minimised and clearly were in this project, by careful briefing, impressing upon learners how the instrument is there to empower them and not a 'test' and by screening rigorously to eliminate invalid or unreliable assessments.

As in the other reports from the ELLI R&D Programme, it is in the voices of the learners themselves that we see light shed on the most authentic evidence of positive impact and response. Firstly, echoing the findings of earlier projects, there is a widespread and positive receptiveness to the assessment and profiling process. Its face validity is confirmed again by comments such as, 'you get a picture of where you are!' and 'it shows how you work'. More

significant and encouraging still is the evidence of significant change in these learners' testimonies:

> *I'm not afraid to give answers now…*
> *I'm confident now…*
> *I'm more responsible…*
> *I had to be helped to come here… had no confidence… Now I've completed my profile… found out about myself… I can believe in myself*

This is suggestive profound personal growth and progress towards what Maslow called 'self-actualisation' in fulfilment of the higher human needs (Maslow A. 1971). The course providers, who were sceptical at first about the relevance of this assessment tool (particularly in its electronic form) to their practice, after becoming engaged by participation could see the difference in their students' attitudes and self-concept and agree that learning power profiles could play an important part in highlighting their needs, setting targets and helping them to fulfil their potential.

The quantitative evidence supports these findings well, revealing statistically significant change in the self-reporting of the cohort as a whole in all seven of the learning power dimensions. Gains ranged from over nine percent to twelve-and-a-half percent which, even allowing for the issue of validity in this version, represents the most dramatic improvement of any of the populations so far researched in the ELLI R&D programme. It is particularly interesting that Critical Curiosity was the lowest dimension in the baseline assessment on entry and showed the highest gains on re-assessment post-intervention, indicating an increased openness of mind and reduced passivity in these learners. The next highest gain was found in Meaning Making, which is all about seeing that learning 'matters to me', making sense of it all and is associated in other studies with high academic achievement. It is easy to see the link between this and Strategic Awareness, the dimension in which the second lowest mean score was recorded on entry and in which the third highest gains were made: this is about the disposition to take responsibility and see (perhaps for the first time for some of these learners) how any piece of learning connects with the bigger picture of a 'manageable' learning journey.

The differences between the providers are more difficult to interpret 'from the outside'. These particular statistics of variance need to be seen in the light of the providers' inside knowledge of the precise needs and make-up of their groups and the strategies and interventions they used in response to the ELLI profiles. The data suggests strongly that the quality of these things had a serious impact on the outcomes. The providers now have the opportunity to use this data and analysis for the purpose of self-evaluation and in order to inform important judgements in refining, disseminating and building upon their most effective practices.

Throughout this project, feedback from learners, managers and tutors provided strong narrative evidence to support what the data was saying: that attending to NEET learners' capabilities for learning how to learn leads to positive growth and change in their perceptions of themselves. Interview evidence and case studies underscored significant changes in learners' perceptions of themselves as learners. Tutors highlighted the benefits of staged, embedded practices to help learners make sense of themselves, to understand how they can grow as learners and become better equipped to take up new learning opportunities.

Attracting this group of learners to participate in an innovative programme was all about meeting them 'where they are at'. Tutors and learners saw the importance of understanding

learners in learner–centred environments. The principles of learning power and its practice place the learner at the centre, measuring these 'soft, affective areas' to engender positive attitudes to learning. The qualitative evidence shows how learners can be enabled and empowered to become better able to work and solve problems together, ask questions and be interdependent: all necessary to employability in the 'real world'.

Embedding ELLI in well structured programmes which regularly review and support individuals' personal learning, offers encouragement to 'hang on in there'. The 'travelling' of these learners, in this relatively short time-span, can be appreciated through their quotations, illuminating moments in a journey in which they can be seen to become palpably less fragile, less dependent and more able to own and use their capacity to learn. They illustrate how they became connected to hitherto untouched, under-developed or quashed areas of interest and learning. This experience, by stimulating their understanding of the principles and possibilities of learning to learn, encapsulated in diagnostic profiles and translated into strategic pathways, engendered hope in a future – a hitherto unfamiliar experience for some. At last, they really believed they were 'getting started'!

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